

What Future Is There for the Negro Pharmacist?

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DISTRIBUTION OF NEGRO POPULATION

I AM putting the title of my paper in the form of a question hoping that it will stimulate you to more serious thought. There are approximately from ten to twelve million Negroes in the United States and Canada, or approximately one-tenth of the entire population. Surely any problem which concerns the health and happiness and the buying power of one-tenth of the population of North America deserves a few minutes of your time. Nor can the educators and leaders of thought in the Northern States and in the Provinces any longer toss this problem aside with the superficial remark that "this is a Southern problem, let the South solve it." There are more Negroes in one Northern city today than there are in any one city in the South. Indeed, I am very sure that there are more Negroes today living either in New York City or in the City of Chicago than there are in any city of the South. There are more Negroes living today in the City of New York than in the whole Southern State of Oklahoma, and, of course, there is an immense Negro population in such Northern cities as Philadelphia, Detroit, Cincinnati and others.

DISTRIBUTION OF NEGRO PHARMACY STUDENTS IN COLLEGES

During the last college year a committee of our faculty sent out questionnaires to 48 pharmaceutical colleges, 38 of these colleges replied to the questionnaires. Briefly: The tabulation revealed the following statistics: Number of graduates in the last five years from pharmaceutical colleges 90, of this number 75 were

male and 15 female. There were still in the colleges in the first class 20, second class 29, third class 33, and fourth class leading to B. S. degree 6, total 88.

During the past five years our own school, the Pharmacy Department of Meharry Medical College, has graduated 95 students, or more than all the other colleges have graduated.

DISTRIBUTION OF NEGRO GRADUATE PHARMACISTS AS TO STATES

The tabulation also revealed the following facts in regard to Negro graduates or registered pharmacists:

Negro pharmacists registered in Northern States	80
Negro pharmacists registered in Southern States	250
Total.....	330

DISTRIBUTION OF NEGRO PHARMACISTS IN NEGRO DRUG STORES AND IN WHITE- OWNER STORES

Our questionnaires revealed the following in regard to the distribution of Negro pharmacists in respect to ownership: The general opinion seems to prevail that between 10% and 20% of Negro pharmacists own their own stores, approximately 10% are employed by white owners of stores, and approximately from 50% to 60% are employed by Negro drug store owners. Probably 20% of Negro pharmacists never take up their profession of pharmacy as pharmacists.

OPPORTUNITIES IN SMALL TOWNS

Nearly all of the States Board Secretaries urge that the graduates of Pharmacy schools should give more careful consideration to the

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smaller towns. This, I might say in passing, coincides exactly with what is urged upon our medical and upon our dental graduates. Too many of the graduates are rushing to the cities, and giving very little attention to the needs of the smaller towns, forcing upon us again the question which leaders in medical and dental education are also trying to answer; namely:—*Are we really graduating too many pharmacists, or is the trouble really in a lack of proper distribution of our graduates?* In other words, if young pharmacists would be willing to settle and practice their profession in smaller towns instead of so many of them rushing into the cities, would there be an overproduction of pharmacists, and, particularly, of Negro pharmacists? Our own experience at Meharry is that our graduates are not seeking service in these smaller towns, but there is a tendency among them, as in medicine and in dentistry, to flock into the larger cities where competition is much keener than in the smaller towns.

WHAT IS THE MINIMUM POPULATION NEEDED TO SUPPORT A NEGRO DRUG STORE?

And that leads to the next question: What is the minimum population that will supply a livelihood for a fairly well-stocked drug store. The writer thinks, and especially among a Negro population, whose economic or buying power is lower than that of the white race, that 1800 to 2500 population is required to support an average fairly well-stocked and efficient drug store. There is an immense number of towns containing from 2000 to 3000 Negro population, particularly in what is known as the "Southland." The writer is forced to the opinion that if the young Negro pharmacists would be willing to go to the towns containing a population, let us say of from 1800 to 2500 Negroes, they could make not only a good living, but also they could make very good money.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE STATISTICS

In search of reliable statistics about Negro pharmacists we wrote to the Department of

Commerce at Washington and received the following information: They have listed 672 Negro drug stores owned and scattered through 33 states. There are at present one or more drug stores in each of 127 towns and cities in the United States. While the information received from this particular division of the Department is not guaranteed as absolutely correct and final, for they are still working on these statistics, the writer of the letter makes the following interesting comment:

"Based purely on observation and personal opinion it may be stated that the employed pharmacists just about equal the number of owners, since a few of the stores have as many as two and three employees while many more have only the owner as the registered pharmacist. In case of the owner pharmacists, in the larger cities there is usually found about one relief man to every five stores who works a day or a fraction thereof for different druggists."

The same writer makes the following very interesting personal observation:

"After scrutinizing my, as yet incomplete, files of white business, employing colored salespeople, I am of the opinion that all told, about 200 Negro pharmacists are employed in white owner drug stores. This is especially true in the black belts in the larger cities.

"The Walgreen Drug Stores of Chicago seem to be the largest chain concern employing Negro pharmacists. In Chicago, and in several other of the mid-west cities, in which they operate, somewhere between a dozen and a score of registered Negro pharmacists are employed.

"In Chicago and Los Angeles, Negro druggists have taken on some of the characteristics of the voluntary chain stores in that they are buying together and doing joint advertising in race papers. This, with a wider distribution of Negro druggists, more of them going into smaller communities instead of piling up in the larger cities, will do much toward solving some of the problems of the Negro druggists."

OPINIONS OF OTHER LEADERS IN PHARMACY

We also sent questionnaires to secretaries of boards of examiners in the various states and to educators in pharmacy schools to ascertain their opinions in regard to the opportunities for Negro pharmacists, and the following quo-

tations express the general tenor of the replies received:

"I do not know of any particular *need* for colored pharmacists, though I believe the opportunities are as good, if not better, for properly equipped, capable colored men as for whites.

"Capable pharmacists can succeed in any reasonable location.

"The high standards of education now being required by both medical and pharmaceutical legislation makes it not only desirable, but necessary, that young men of all races be not content with less than the best in professional education.

"The constant advance which is being made along the lines of hygiene and public health makes it very desirable that the colored pharmacist be so qualified as to be able to render to his people the service to which they are rightly entitled.

"I commend the efforts being made to advance these standards and trust that the colored people may be able to demonstrate their capacity and good citizenship by acquitting themselves creditably in this regard."

S U M M A R Y

1. There are approximately 330 Registered Negro Pharmacists.
2. From 50% to 60% are employed in Negro owned drug stores; 10% to 20% own their own drug stores; 10% are employed in drug stores owned by the white group.
3. Negro pharmacists, like Negro physicians and dentists, are crowding into the larger cities, where competition is fierce.
4. Wherever there is a town containing a Negro population of from 1800 to 2000 without a drug store there is a real opportunity for a Negro pharmacist.
5. White business men and Negro physicians should help deserving Negro pharmacists to finance small drug stores.
6. There are many such opportunities not only in the South, but also in the North, for energetic, capable Negro pharmacists.
7. The big problem for Negro pharmacists and their friends to solve is how to bring Negro pharmacists in contact with the towns that have no Negro pharmacists. Briefly, it is a

question of proper distribution of this particular kind of Negro talent and service.

SUGGESTIONS

1. The writer would suggest that one serious obstacle in the way of Negroes owning their own drug stores is the fact that not many Negroes are able financially to stock new stores. There the leaders of the white pharmacists should assist them. This could be done by interesting the better type of Negro and white physicians not only financially, but also by getting them to send their prescriptions to Negro pharmacists.
2. One of the first things to do is to ascertain just how many towns are there in the North, as well as the South, having a minimum Negro population of from 1800 to 2500 and having no Negro pharmacists.
3. Wherever the Negro population is in excess of the white population the white pharmacists ought not to compete with the Negro pharmacist but they should encourage and assist well-trained Negro pharmacists to serve their own people.
4. We shall appreciate getting any information from any member of the Association that would enable us to place well-trained pharmacists, as we have graduates looking for employment.
5. I appeal to the Associated Negro Press, the Negro Business League and to The National Medical Association.

CONCLUSION

It is difficult to evaluate the service of the Negro Drug Store as an agency for racial harmony.

After all is said and done, the Negro pharmacist must work out his own salvation, one of the best friends the Negro or any other race ever had was the late great Julius Rosenwald, and he put the matter simply and tersely:

"It isn't being a genius or a superman that makes a man a success but rather the ability to connect with opportunities."